

Quality of life encompasses a wide range of elements but can generally be defined as “the economic well being, life style, and environment that an area offers.” (International Economic Development Council) Some advantages Kentuckians enjoy in terms of quality of life include affordable housing, low crime, top-notch medical facilities, and quality education.

Kentucky's goal to raise the state's standard of living and quality of life above the national average by 2020 will only be achieved by ensuring that all citizens are well-educated. Kentucky has made significant progress in the past 15 years to ensure that citizens at all levels of education from primary to postsecondary and adult receive high quality educational opportunities.

The state's educational reform initiatives in both the secondary system and higher education are recognized among the most ambitious state level education reforms in the U.S. With continuing success of these initiatives, Kentucky's students are realizing measurable improvements in national measures of student progress and more Kentuckians of all ages are achieving higher educational attainment levels necessary to enjoy a higher standard of living.

The State of the Commonwealth Index published by the Kentucky Long Term Policy Research Center shows that Kentucky made great strides in improving quality of life in the state relative to the nation and its peer states between 1990 and 2001. Kentucky improved its standing both nationally and among its peer states in the majority of the 26 long-term quality of life indicators that make up the State of the Commonwealth Index. For more information go to: http://www.kltprc.net/foresight/Chpt_75.htm.

Community life: Kentuckians take pride in the many vibrant communities across the state and display great spirit in improving their towns and enhancing quality of life. Kentucky's metropolitan areas are unique for offering all the amenities of big cities while exuding a small town personality. A few of the national distinctions Kentucky communities have received recently follows:

- In *Expansion Management's* 2005 Quality of Life Quotient Rankings, Lexington was ranked as a 5-Star Community while Bowling Green, Cincinnati (Ohio-Ky.-Ind.), Evansville-Henderson (Ky.-Ind.) and Owensboro ranked as 4-Star Communities.
- The cities of Ashland, Henderson, Hopkinsville, Lexington, Louisville, and Owensboro were named by Primacy and Sterling's BestPlaces among the best places in the nation for relocating families.
- The cities of Lexington, Louisville, Mt. Sterling, Murray-Calloway County and Ohio County have been named five of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People by the America's Promise Alliance.
- In 2004, Partners for Livable Communities ranked Louisville as one of America's Most Livable Mid-Sized Cities.

- The City of Paducah received national recognition for its re-development of Lower Town Paducah to an artist's community.
- The City of Bowling Green was selected as one of the country's Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2006, an award sponsored by the National Trust of Historic Preservation.
- *Site Selection* magazine ranked Kentucky third in the nation for the highest number of micropolitan areas in the top 100. The Micropolitan Awards honor communities with populations of 50,000 or fewer for their ability to secure new and expanded corporate facility projects. Those honored for finishing in the top 100 in Kentucky include: Paducah, Glasgow, Danville, Richmond, Somerset, Corbin, Frankfort, Mount Sterling, Murray, and the Union City, Tennessee-Kentucky region.
- Kentucky has the fourth largest number of listings in the National Register of Historic Places.

ACCRA Cost of Living Index

City	Composite Index
Bowling Green	93.9
Hopkinsville	87.0
Lexington	94.9
Louisville	93.9
Paducah	87.1
U.S.	100.0

Source: ACCRA Cost Of Living Index, Fourth Quarter, 2005.

- The commowealth has more Preserve America Communities than any other state.
<http://www.preserveamerica.gov/communities.html>.

Cost of living: Each of the Kentucky cities surveyed by ACCRA in its *Cost of Living Index* has a composite index of less than the national average of 100%. The index includes grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services.

Crime rate: Kentucky's violent crime rate is far below the national rate of 465.5 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants according to *Crime in the United States*, 2004, a Federal Bureau of Investigations publication. The state's violent crime rate of 244.9 per 100,000 inhabitants is also quite low when compared to its peer states.

Homeownership and housing costs: Home ownership rates steadily increased between 1990 and 2000 in Kentucky and remained consistently higher than the national average. The U.S. rate of homeownership in 2004 was 69% of the population compared to a 73.3% rate for Kentucky. (U.S. Census Bureau) Kentucky ranked 14th in home ownership in 2004.

Housing affordability is one of the many advantages of living in Kentucky. The median sale price of an existing single family home in Louisville for 2004 was \$131,500. Lexington's median existing home price was \$138,700 for the same period. The national single family sales price for existing homes was \$184,100. (National Association of Realtors).

Education: Kentucky's public school students are learning at higher levels than ever before. Students in Kentucky made remarkable gains in achievement as shown in the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from 1996-2000. Kentucky eighth graders had statistically significant gains in both math and science. Other signs of educational progress include healthier children who are better prepared to learn, record enrollments in postsecondary institutions and higher graduation rates.

Building upon the vast educational reforms of 1990 Kentucky passed the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 and the Adult Education Act of 2000. This Act identified Kentucky's low level of educational attainment as the central barrier to an improved quality of life and stronger economy in the Commonwealth. Long-term goals were established to build a postsecondary system that delivers educational services at or above the national average in quantity and quality.

Long-term goals for the two largest public universities as outlined in the Improvement Act are as follows:

The University of Kentucky will be a major comprehensive research institution ranked nationally among the top 20 public universities by 2020. The University of Louisville will be a premier, nationally recognized metropolitan research university by 2020. Bucks for Brains combines public monies and private donations to create endowed chairs and professorships and helps universities in their efforts to compete for federally funded research.

Kentucky's system of public postsecondary education includes eight universities, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and the Kentucky Virtual University. There are 20 independent or private colleges and universities.

Health care and health facilities: State-of-the-art health care and nationally renowned medical research make Kentucky a leader in finding cures to improve the lives of our citizens. Jewish Hospital was named one of the nation's "50 Best Hospitals" in the areas of orthopedic and heart-surgery care by U.S. News & World Report. A nationwide study has ranked Baptist Hospital East in Louisville, Flaget Memorial Hospital in Bardstown, Saint Joseph Hospital East in Lexington and King's Daughters Medical Center in Ashland among the top 100 hospitals in the nation. (The Solucient "100 Top Hospitals National Benchmark for Success 2005").

Researchers at UK have contributed vital knowledge to areas such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, stroke, cardiovascular disease, drug development, and spinal cord and head injuries. UK's pharmaceutical scientists are working to develop new drugs for cancer, AIDS, and cardiovascular disease. The University's Center for Drug and Alcohol Research is working to solve public health and substance abuse problems. UK is also fostering new collaborations between clinical and basic science research to better serve patients and improve healthcare throughout the Commonwealth. (The Lane Report, January 2006)

A sampling of some areas of research at U of L includes aging, health and life sciences, cardiovascular innovations, Parkinson's disease, stroke, neuroscience, spinal cord injuries, and

research to overcome cancer. The University of Louisville has had a major breakthrough in stem cell research with the identification of cells in the adult body that seem to behave like embryonic stem cells. U of L's Brown Cancer Center houses a \$2.9 million TomoTherapy Hi-Art System, one of fewer than ten centers in the nation to offer this revolutionary cancer treatment. (The Lane Report, January 2006).

Cultural and recreational amenities: From wood carving and quilting to the symphony, opera and ballet, the arts are woven into the very fabric that is Kentucky.

Kentucky leads the nation in developing cultural tourism, based on the personal, authentic experience of a region's culture. U.S. Route 23 through the eastern Kentucky mountains is promoted as the Country Music Highway. Signs along the roads alert travelers to the homeplaces and hometowns of some of country music's best performers. The project is a model for the nation.

Kentucky is home to many artisans creating both traditional and trend-setting folk arts and crafts. The Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen hosts one of the top rated national craft fairs in the fall and spring of each year in Berea. Kentucky's thriving arts community includes the Kentucky Artisan Center in Berea and the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman. Paducah is home to the Museum of American Quilter's Society which houses the largest collection of contemporary art quilts in the world.

The Kentucky History Center in Frankfort is a state-of-the-art museum and research library. The Speed Art Museum in Louisville is Kentucky's oldest and largest art museum with over 12,000 pieces in its permanent collection. The Headley Whitney Museum in Lexington is nationally unique in its focus on decorative arts. Other notable art collections and exhibitions may be found in Ashland, Bowling Green, Covington, Owensboro, Paducah, and Richmond.

Louisville supports a broad range of high quality performing arts groups. Actors Theatre of Louisville is host to the Humana Festival of New American Plays dubbed "the hottest ticket of the national art scene." Horse Cave Theatre has received national critical acclaim for its productions. The Lexington Children's Theatre, established in 1938, is one of the oldest continuously operating theatres for young people in America. Bowling Green, Lexington, Louisville, northern Kentucky, Owensboro and Paducah all have professional orchestras.

Northern Kentucky offers a wide array of attractions from theatre and museums to historic districts and Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort. The city of Newport in northern Kentucky is a revitalized community and home to the 10-acre Newport on the Levee and the Newport Aquarium. The aquarium is a state-of-the-art facility, highlighting its amazing animals with 200 feet of clear underwater tunnels, see-through floors, walk-around exhibits, a touch pool and one of the nation's largest open-air shark viewing exhibits. Northern Kentucky's communities claim a rich historical and cultural legacy. Covington's MainStrasse Village is a historic district and community with unique shops and restaurants set in a neighborhood of parks and Victorian and

Classic Italianate homes of the mid to late 1800's. Newport's Hofbrauhaus located at 3rd and Saratoga at the Levee, is America's first authentic German Hofbrauhaus featuring Bavarian cuisine and world famous beers of the Royal Brewery in Munich. Maysville, on the southern bank of the Ohio River is home to the Underground Railroad Museum.

The Great Outdoors: From the mountains of eastern Kentucky to the massive lakes of western Kentucky, the state's natural beauty lends itself to an abundance of outdoor activities. Boating, golf, fishing, hiking, white-water rafting, and water skiing are among the many recreational opportunities Kentuckians enjoy.

The Kentucky State Parks System includes 50 resort parks, recreational parks and historic sites. Mammoth Cave National Park and the Big South Fork River and Recreation Area are in Kentucky. Kentucky's temperate weather allows for year-round golf and there are many challenging public and private golf courses throughout the Commonwealth. The Kentucky Speedway in Sparta, Kentucky hosts NASCAR, ARCA, Indy Racing League and many other racing series. Visit www.kentuckyspeedway.com for more information.

Western Kentucky is one of the nation's finest outdoor recreation areas. The state's two largest bodies of water are in western Kentucky: the 160,000-acre Kentucky Lake and 58,000-acre Lake Barkley surround the 170,000-acre outdoor recreational area called the Land Between the Lakes. In far southeastern Kentucky, the panoramic Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is the largest national historical park in the country with 20,305 mountainous acres. (Kentucky Great Getaway Guide). Go to www.kytourism.com to find out more about Kentucky's many attractions.

Sports: College basketball is popular in Kentucky. The University of Kentucky Wildcats are seven-time NCAA national champions and the University of Louisville Cardinals are two-time NCAA national champions. Kentucky is home to triple-A and single-A baseball teams, the Louisville Bats and the Lexington Legends, respectively. Just minutes from Northern Kentucky, the Cincinnati Reds baseball and Cincinnati Bengals football teams provide major professional sports venues.

Kentucky's scenic beauty makes it ideal for golf. Golf courses in the state are as varied as the topography in the state generally. Many courses have gently rolling terrain, courses in eastern Kentucky feature beautiful mountain views, and in western Kentucky golfers may enjoy playing by the vast lakes that characterize the area.

The 37th Ryder Cup will be played from September 19-21, 2008 at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville. The Ryder Cup, which pairs 12 of the top American golfers against 12 of their European counterparts, is expected to be the highest-attended sporting event ever held in Kentucky. The international event could draw more than 210,000 spectators during its five days of practice rounds and competition according to organizers.

Thoroughbreds: Kentucky is the heart of the thoroughbred horse industry. Central Kentucky holds the world's greatest concentration of thoroughbred breeding farms, many such as Calumet Farm are world-renowned. The Kentucky Horse Park near Lexington is the only park of its kind in the world. The park features two museums, twin theaters and 50 different breeds of horses. The park is also home to some of the world's champion horses. The most famous of Kentucky's racetracks are Keeneland in Lexington and Churchill Downs in Louisville. The premier thoroughbred racing event in the World is the Kentucky Derby, held annually the first Saturday in May at Churchill Downs. Find out more about the Kentucky Derby by visiting www.kentuckyderby.com.

The 2010 World Equestrian Games will be in Lexington at the Kentucky Horse Park. It will be the first time that the Games will be staged outside of Europe and also the first time that the Games are staged at a single venue as no other site in the world has comparable facilities to those available at the Kentucky Horse Park. The World Equestrian Games take place every four years and include world championships of seven equestrian sports – show jumping, dressage, eventing, driving, reining, vaulting and endurance riding. The Games in Kentucky will represent the largest equestrian sporting event ever held in the United States.

Topography and climate: Kentucky is a beautiful state with a vast range of topography from the mountains of eastern Kentucky to the vast lakes and woodlands of western Kentucky. This diversity offers ample ways to enjoy the outdoors. The state's geographical location produces a moderate climate. Annual mean temperatures vary from approximately 58°F in the southwest to approximately 52°F in the northeast. January is the coldest month with mean temperatures ranging from approximately 35°F in the south to approximately 29°F in the north. July is the warmest month with mean temperatures from 79°F to 74°F across the Commonwealth. The Kentucky Climate Center at Western Kentucky University is an excellent resource on the state's climate: <http://kyclim.wku.edu/>.

Residential Utility Costs: Both business and residential customers in Kentucky enjoy some of the lowest utility prices in the U.S. The state's abundant supply of coal means electricity is very affordable. Kentucky's residential electricity prices were the second lowest in the nation at 6.11 cents per Kwh. (Energy Information Administration) Kentucky's residential natural gas costs are below the national average.

Telecommunications: An integrated system of fiber optic technology, satellites and cellular and digital microwave technology provides a solid infrastructure for Kentucky. The Kentucky Information Highway is a statewide digital network with an access ramp in all of Kentucky's 120 counties. It provides for high speed, high capacity delivery of voice, data, and video transmission.

ConnectKentucky is the commonwealth's strategic alliance of technology-minded companies, universities and government entities working to accelerate technology in Kentucky. ConnectKentucky works with policy-makers to support Kentucky's technology strategy and works statewide to grow the Commonwealth's technology infrastructure.



Quality of Life

Governor Fletcher's Prescription for Innovation is a comprehensive broadband deployment and adoption plan that will leverage state, federal and private investment to blanket Kentucky with high-speed Internet access. The initiative will encourage citizen use of computers and the Internet, and provide every Kentucky community with an online presence for improving citizen services and promoting economic development.

To learn more about the quality of life in Kentucky visit the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development's Quality of Life resources page at:
<http://www.thinkkentucky.com/kyedc/qualityoflife.asp>.

June, 2006